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ABSTRACT

This report presents results of a national survey of college president assessment policies and practices and describes a "typical" presidential assessment process constructed from the most frequent survey responses. Respondents included 1,348 presidents and 535 board chairs. The typical assessment process lasted about a month; information was contributed only by trustees; the president prepared a confidential self-assessment statement; the board chair (and sometimes others) held confidential meetings with him and prepared a confidential, written summary of the assessment; the president had an opportunity to comment on the final draft; an oral report on the review was presented to the entire governing board; and the board typically rated the president's performance as "outstanding." The survey included questions that addressed policies, guidelines, and practices; the role of the president; the president and the board; outcomes reported by presidents and board chairs; and assistance for future reviews. Each of the survey questions is analyzed with a table showing answers for both public and private institutions. Also provided is information on the survey methodology, including data collection and the survey population. (Contains 38 references.) (DB)

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Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

A National Survey of Presidential Performance Assessment Policies and Practices

BY MERRILL PELLOWS SCHWARTZ

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Association of Governing Boards
of Universities and Colleges
One Dupont Circle • Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: 202/296-8400 Fax: 202/223-7053
Internet: http://www.agb.org

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Introduction

Like so many other efforts to demonstrate to the public that higher education is accountable and performing up to expectations, the process of presidential evaluation has taken hold. In the mid 1970s, approximately one-quarter of colleges and universities formally evaluated their presidents. But by the 1990s, surveys by the College and University Personnel Association (CUPA) showed that the practice of evaluating presidents increased from 55 percent in 1984 to 81 percent in 1995.

Most academic chief executives are evaluated on an annual basis by the board of trustees, a board committee, or the board chair, according to CUPA. Yet beyond the matter of how often evaluations are done and who has the responsibility for carrying out the review, there has been a dearth of empirical data.

In 1997, Merrill Schwartz conducted a survey of presidents and board chairs of American colleges and universities regarding board and presidential assessment policies and practices. A large population of presidents (2,112) and board chairs (1,627) was included in the study, and the response rate was high: 64 percent (1,348) for presidents and 33 percent (535) for board chairs (of institutions not in systems).

The literature on the evaluation of academic presidents encourages boards to undertake this key responsibility and stresses the importance of using reviews to improve presidential performance. Though it has become a common practice, the evaluation of academic presidents remains controversial because the stakes are so high. Some fear poorly conducted assessments will damage a president and the institution as well. Yet, according to the data reported here, most presidents are satisfied with their reviews and find them useful, although there undoubtedly are ways to improve the process. That so few presidents or board chairs report any negative effects from their evaluation processes may be the most significant finding of this research.

This Occasional Paper reports data regarding presidential assessment policies and practices and includes a description of the "typical" presidential assessment process constructed from the most frequent survey responses. Presidents responded to questions regarding the process used for their most recent assessment and its outcomes or results. Board chairs responded to questions regarding the outcomes of the most recently completed presidential assessment at their institution. In most cases, data are reported for public and independent institutions combined, unless there was a difference between the sectors of ten percentage points or more.

Since the consequences of poorly conducted presidential assessments may be grave, information that supports good practice is helpful to college and university

chief executives and trustee leaders. It is hoped that the data from this study will help presidents and boards examine their presidential assessment policies and practices. Boards also are encouraged to examine their own performance in conjunction with presidential reviews. Occasional Paper No. 35, "A National Survey of Board Performance Assessment Policies and Practices," is available from AGB.

How to Use This Survey

This survey will help governing boards and chief executives compare their own conduct of presidential reviews with the process at other institutions. The data in the tables offer ideas to improve policies and practices concerning such reviews and add to our understanding of how board chairs and presidents perceive the value and outcomes of this important but delicate process. The survey provides answers to such questions as these:

- How frequently do boards conduct formal, comprehensive reviews of their chief executives?
- How much time is typically required from start to finish?
- Who typically is responsible for overseeing the process?
- What functional areas of presidential performance are typically explored?
- What sources of information are typically included, and who is usually consulted?
- To what extent is the process tied to compensation adjustments or contract renewals?
- Is the president typically given the opportunity and courtesy of seeing the final drafts of written reports and commenting on them before they are distributed to others?
- Are most presidents informed at the time of their appointment of existing policies concerning performance reviews?
- How satisfied are presidents and board chairs with the review process at their own institutions?
- What outcomes are reasonably expected from the typical review?

The "Typical" Presidential Performance Review Process

The survey data reveal a wide variety of policies and practices regarding presidential assessment, yet some trends emerge. This summary of the presidential assessment process constitutes the "typical" presidential review—not the ideal model—derived from the most commonly reported presidential assessment practices in the survey.

The typical president is a man in his fifties, in at least his fifth year in office, who serves under the terms of a three-year or four-year contract. He was not informed about the process for his own presidential assessment at the time he was appointed, although a written board policy requiring assessment of the president did exist at the time. The president's most recent review was conducted by the board less than one year ago, using a new process that the president was consulted about and helped shape. The process lasted about one month and was typical of past reviews.

Information about the president's performance was contributed by trustees; other constituents were not included, interviewed, or surveyed. The president prepared a confidential self-assessment statement, and the board chair (and sometimes other individuals) held confidential meetings with him and prepared a confidential, written summary of the assessment. The president had an opportunity to comment on the final draft and was provided with a copy of the final summary. An oral report on the president's review was presented to the entire governing board.

In describing the review process, the typical president believed that specific future objectives were set and he came away with a clear idea of the criteria for good performance and of the board's expectations. He believed his performance was reviewed against agreed-upon goals, and he learned how to strengthen his performance and to see some shortcomings in his job performance.

The review was used to help decide on compensation, and an increase usually resulted. Other conditions of employment were rarely discussed or changed.

After the review, the president felt more valued and appreciated. The president and chair found the president's relations with the board, the feedback he received from the board, the level of his own performance, and his ability to lead either improved or stayed about the same. For the most part, his relations with the community and faculty did not change. The chair thought the president's understanding of what the board needs to function more effectively had improved. Neither the chair nor the president found any negative impact from the president's review in any of these areas.

The president was satisfied with the thoroughness of the review, which ranged from academic leadership and management to personal characteristics. He also was

satisfied with the current level of trust and openness between himself and the board and with the feedback he received from the board, both in the normal course of his work and as part of the last review. Overall, the typical president was satisfied with the review, felt good about how the appraisal was conducted, and had few suggestions to improve the process.

The board typically rated the president's performance as "outstanding."

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POLICIES, GUIDELINES, AND PRACTICES (PRESIDENTS' RESPONSES)

- *Most presidents are reviewed as a matter of written board policy.*

TABLE 1
IS THERE A WRITTEN POLICY REQUIRING ASSESSMENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S PERFORMANCE?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
No	40.4	30.8	46.7
Yes	56.7	66.4	50.4
n/a	2.9	2.8	2.9
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
If yes, type of policy:			
Board Policy	79.5	73.9	84.2
Legislative/Legal Requirement	3.9	6.8	1.5
Other Written Policy	10.9	11.6	10.2
n/a	5.8	7.7	4.1
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

- *Most assessments are supposed to be conducted annually, by the board.*

TABLE 2
ABOUT HOW OFTEN IS YOUR PERFORMANCE SUPPOSED TO BE ASSESSED?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
No requirement	13.5	10.0	15.8
No schedule	5.7	2.8	7.6
Schedule varies	5.4	3.0	7.0
Scheduled as indicated*	35.6	41.5	31.8
No answer	39.8	42.6	37.9
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
***Scheduled as indicated**			
Less than annually	0.6	0.9	0.4
Annually	84.2	90.9	78.5
Every 2 years	4.6	2.3	6.5
Every 3 years	5.2	2.7	7.3
Every 4 years	1.3	0.5	1.9
Every 5 years	3.5	1.8	5.0
Every 6+ years	–	–	–
Other	0.2	–	0.4
n/a	0.4	0.9	–
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

TABLE 3
WHEN WAS YOUR MOST RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION COMPLETED?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
Never	26.1	20.4	29.8
< 1 year ago	54.2	64.2	47.8
1-2 years ago	10.4	8.7	11.5
2-3 years ago	3.3	2.8	3.5
3-4 years ago	1.4	0.4	2.1
4-5 years ago	1.2	0.6	1.6
> 5 years ago	1.3	1.1	1.3
n/a	2.2	1.9	2.3
Total	**100.1**	**101.1**	**99.9**

TABLE 4
WHO WAS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR CONDUCTING THE ASSESSMENT?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
Entire Board	26.6	51.7	8.2
Board Chair	26.3	15.9	34.0
Standing Committee	24.3	10.4	34.5
Other	9.4	11.8	7.7
Special Committee	8.9	5.9	11.1
External Consultant	1.0	0.9	1.0
n/a	3.4	3.3	3.5
Total	**99.9**	**99.9**	**100**

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• *Information on the president's performance most commonly came from board members.*

TABLE 5

FROM WHOM WAS INFORMATION COLLECTED AS PART OF THE MOST RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

	Total %	Public %	Private %
Trustees	68.1	65.6	69.9
Executive cabinet	32.0	26.5	36.1
Faculty	31.6	27.7	34.5
Professional staff	18.8	19.7	18.3
Students	18.0	15.6	19.7
Presidents' staff	16.3	17.5	15.3
College/university foundation trustees	15.9	15.2	16.4
Nonprofessional staff	15.8	18.5	13.8
Alumni	13.3	7.6	17.4
"Others"	11.8	12.1	11.7
Advisory board members	8.6	8.5	8.7
Donors	8.3	6.2	9.9
Government officials	5.9	10.9	2.3
Other presidents	3.9	6.4	2.1
No one	6.1	6.4	5.9
Don't know/NA	11.4	12.1	11.0

Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to multiple answers.

• *Meetings, reports, and information from others, if part of the review, were generally kept confidential.*

TABLE 6

INDICATE WHETHER, FOR YOUR MOST RECENT ASSESSMENT, THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE CONFIDENTIAL (YES), NOT CONFIDENTIAL (NO), OR NOT APPLICABLE (NA).

	Yes %	No %	n/a %	Total %
Self-assessment statement	56.3	15.6	28.1	**100**
Information from questionnaires	36.6	9.7	53.7	**100**
Information from interviews	35.6	6.4	58.0	**100**
Summary report	51.5	18.2	30.3	**100**
Discussions/meetings w/president	79.3	10.3	10.3	**99.9**

• *Presidents were generally satisfied with the thoroughness of their reviews.*

TABLE 7

HOW THOROUGHLY WERE THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF PRESIDENTIAL PERFORMANCE COVERED IN YOUR MOST RECENT ASSESSMENT?

	Satisfactorily %	n/a or Unsatisfactorily %	Undecided %	Total %
Administrative leadership	89.0	2.8	8.2	**100**
Budget and finance	86.4	2.9	10.6	**99.9**
External relations	84.8	4.3	10.8	**99.9**
Personal characteristics	83.5	3.2	13.2	**99.9**
Academic leadership	83.1	5.5	11.3	**99.9**
Fund-raising	78.2	4.5	17.2	**99.9**

- *About half of the institutions used the president's review as the occasion for salary adjustment or contract renewal but did not discuss or change other conditions of employment at that time.*

TABLE 8

INSTITUTIONS WHICH USED PRESIDENTIAL REVIEWS FOR DISCUSSIONS OR DECISIONS ON SPECIFIED CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT:

	Total %	Public %	Private %
Salary adjustment	52.3	50.2	53.8
Contract renewal	48.1	54.7	43.2
Benefits adjustment	23.2	21.6	24.4
Bonus pay	16.9	10.2	21.8
Family considerations	10.5	4.3	15.2
Sabbatical leave	9.1	5.0	12.2
Other leave	8.0	7.8	8.2
Seminars/conferences	6.5	6.9	6.3

- *Most reviews were completed in less than three months.*

TABLE 9

DURATION OF PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS, IN MONTHS:

Months							
<1	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	>12	n/a	Total
49.6	34.3	6.7	1.2	2.8	0.7	4.6	99.9

- *Most presidents and board chairs reported that the process used for the most recent presidential assessment was typical of past reviews or those they expect to conduct.*

TABLE 10

WAS THE **PROCESS** USED FOR THE MOST RECENT PRESIDENTIAL REVIEW TYPICAL OF PRESIDENTIAL REVIEWS CONDUCTED (OR THAT WILL BE CONDUCTED) AT YOUR INSTITUTION?

	Presidents %	Board Chairs %
Yes	72.0	69.2
n/a	11.2	10.8
No	16.8	20.0
Total	**100**	**100**
If no:		
No typical review	38.3	33.0
Process recently changed	16.2	28.6
Process expected to change	19.8	18.7
Alternates between formal and informal	13.8	8.8
Unusual year	7.2	5.5
Other	2.4	4.4
n/a	6.6	1.1
Total*	**104.3**	**101.1**

**Total exceeds 100 percent due to multiple responses.*

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THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT (PRESIDENTS' RESPONSES)

- *Only about half of the presidents were informed about the presidential assessment process when appointed.*

TABLE 11
WERE YOU INFORMED ABOUT THE PROCESS FOR PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT BEFORE, OR AT THE TIME OF, YOUR APPOINTMENT?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
Yes	45.7	50.5	42.2
No (no process in place)	43.1	34.6	49.3
No (there was a process in place)	8.0	12.3	4.9
n/a	3.2	2.6	3.7
Total	**100**	**100**	**100.1**

- *Most presidents (76 percent) were reviewed using a new or revised process.*

TABLE 12
WAS THE PROCESS USED FOR YOUR PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT EXISTING, REVISED, OR NEW?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
New	55.6	47.4	61.7
Revised	20.4	23.2	18.3
Existing	17.4	24.9	11.8
Other	2.7	0.9	4.0
n/a	3.9	3.6	4.2
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

- *Most presidents participated in determining the process used for their review; only 14 percent had no role in determining the process.*

TABLE 13
WHICH STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN DEVELOPING THE PROCESS USED FOR YOUR PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

	Total %	Public %	Private %
No role in determining process	13.9	18.5	10.5
Consulted regarding the process	42.6	40.0	44.4
Approved of the process	16.8	14.0	18.8
Changes made at my request	9.4	9.0	9.8
Contributed to a new process	31.6	31.3	31.9
Primarily role in new process	21.9	20.6	22.8
Other	1.3	1.1	1.4
n/a	3.5	3.3	3.7

Note: Totals do not equal 100 percent due to multiple answers.

- *If a written report was prepared, most presidents were provided with an opportunity to comment on the draft.*

TABLE 14
IF A WRITTEN REPORT WAS PREPARED, WERE YOU GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE FINAL DRAFT?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
No written report	44.5	32.9	53.0
Written report, no comments	13.5	14.2	12.9
Written report with comments	37.8	49.5	29.1
n/a	4.3	3.3	5.1
Total	**100.1**	**99.9**	**100.1**

- *More than half of the presidents received a summary of their review in writing, though more in the public sector than in the private sector.*

TABLE 15
DID YOU RECEIVE A WRITTEN REPORT OR SUMMARY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
No written report	40.6	29.9	48.4
No	3.5	3.8	3.3
Yes	51.9	63.3	43.6
n/a	4.0	3.1	4.7
Total	**100**	**100.1**	**100**

- *Most presidents (81 percent) had face-to-face meetings to discuss the review; public sector presidents usually met with the entire board, while most private sector presidents met with the board chair or members of the committee conducting the review.*

TABLE 16
WERE FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS HELD WITH YOU AND ANY OF THE FOLLOWING TO DISCUSS THE RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT?

	Total	Public %	Private %
No	4.3	4.5	4.2
Yes	80.7	81.0	80.5
n/a	15.0	14.5	15.3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
If yes, check all that apply:*			
Board chair, alone	50.2	39.8	58.0
Entire governing board	35.9	59.1	18.8
Some/all members of review committee	28.4	12.9	39.8
Chair of committee conducting review	14.8	8.8	19.3
Other	7.2	11.1	4.3
n/a	1.1	1.8	0.6

**Totals do not equal 100% due to multiple answers.*

THE PRESIDENT AND THE BOARD

- *Most boards (75 percent) received a final report on the president's review. Of those, most (88 percent) were presented with an oral report, and about half (46 percent) also received a report in writing. [Board chairs' responses]*

TABLE 17
WAS A FINAL REPORT PRESENTED TO THE ENTIRE GOVERNING BOARD?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
No	19.6	10.5	24.2
Yes	74.7	86.2	68.9
n/a	5.7	3.3	7.0
Total	**100**	**100**	**100.1**
If yes, written or oral?			
Oral only	42.2	25.2	52.9
Written only	7.7	13.7	3.8
Both	45.7	53.4	40.9
n/a	4.4	7.6	2.4
Total	**100**	**99.9**	**100**

- *Most presidents were satisfied with the level of trust and openness in their relationships with their boards and with the quality and specificity of the performance feedback they receive from them. [Presidents' responses]*

TABLE 18
PRESIDENTS' RATING OF FEEDBACK, TRUST AND OPENNESS IN RELATIONSHIP WITH BOARD.

	Satisfied or Very Satisfied		
	Total %	Public %	Private %
Feedback re: assessment	76.4	75.1	77.4
Feedback re: regular work	77.2	77.0	77.4
Level of trust and openness	88.1	84.1	90.9

OUTCOMES REPORTED BY PRESIDENTS AND BOARD CHAIRS

- *Most presidents were satisfied with the way their reviews were conducted and more than half reported that the reviews were useful and goal-related. [Presidents' responses]*

TABLE 19

RATE YOUR AGREEMENT WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS IN TERMS OF HOW WELL THEY DESCRIBE YOUR MOST RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT.

	Presidents Who Agree or Strongly Agree		
	Total %	Public %	Private %
Goals			
Specific future objectives were set	66.4	69.0	64.5
Made clear the criteria of good performance	69.6	66.8	71.6
Performance reviewed against agreed goals	65.7	68.7	63.4
Utility			
Learned how to strengthen my effectiveness	65.1	67.1	63.6
I learned a lot from the appraisal	51.5	53.3	50.2
It helped me see some of my shortcomings	57.8	57.8	57.8
It's clearer what the board expects of me	58.7	60.7	57.3
Satisfaction			
I was satisfied with the review	76.8	76.1	77.4
I feel good about how it was conducted	71.1	72.0	70.4
Many ways I would like it to be different*	26.4	28.9	24.6

** For this item, satisfaction was reflected by responses of disagree or strongly disagree which were: Total, 51.9 percent; Public, 53.3 percent; and Private, 50.2 percent.*

- *Most presidents and board chairs reported the impact of the most recent review was improvement or stability; rarely was any negative impact reported. [Presidents' responses]*

TABLE 20

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF YOUR MOST RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT?

	Pos. %	Neg. %	Same %	n/a %	Total %
Feeling valued & appreciated	60.3	4.7	26.8	8.1	99.9
My compensation & benefits	57.0	0.1	18.9	24.0	100
My relations with the board	49.6	1.6	38.5	10.3	100
My performance since the last review	43.8	0.6	38.6	17.0	100
My ability to lead	42.5	1.7	43.2	12.6	100
Quality of feedback I get from board	40.1	2.9	45.4	11.6	100
My relations with the community	17.3	0.8	52.9	29.0	100
My relations with the faculty	15.1	1.3	55.3	28.3	100

Note Scale:
Positive = generally or somewhat increased and improved,
Negative = generally or somewhat decreased or became worse,
Same = stayed about the same, and n/a = not applicable or no answer.

- *Most presidents and board chairs reported the impact of the most recent review was improvement or stability; rarely was any negative impact reported. [Board chairs' responses]*

TABLE 21
WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE MOST RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT?

	Pos. %	Neg. %	Same %	n/a %	Total %
Pres's compensation & benefits	59.7	0.2	16.3	23.8	100
Pres's understanding of board's needs	50.9	1.5	33.9	13.7	100
Quality of feedback from board	50.4	1.3	35.7	12.5	99.9
Pres's performance since last review	46.5	2.0	36.6	15.0	100.1
Pres's relations with the board	45.8	2.9	38.5	12.8	100
Pres's ability to lead	43.2	1.8	40.3	14.7	100
Pres's relations with the community	23.6	1.3	49.6	25.5	100
Pres's relations with the faculty	22.5	2.0	52.0	23.5	100

Note Scale:
Positive = generally or somewhat increased and improved,
Negative = generally or somewhat decreased or became worse,
Same = stayed about the same, and n/a = not applicable or no answer.

- *Board chairs most often rated the president's performance as outstanding. [Board chairs' responses]*

TABLE 22
IF YOU WERE TO TRANSLATE THE PRESIDENT'S MOST RECENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW INTO AN OVERALL RATING, HOW DID THE BOARD (OR DESIGNEES) RATE THE PRESIDENT'S PERFORMANCE?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
Outstanding	48.7	55.3	45.4
Very satisfactory	31.3	28.3	32.8
Satisfactory	11.5	10.5	11.9
Unsatisfactory	0.9	1.3	0.7
Very unsatisfactory	–	–	–
n/a	7.7	4.6	9.3
Total	**100.1**	**100**	**100.1**

- *According to board chairs, most presidents asked them for feedback about how they're doing less than once a month. [Board chairs' responses]*

TABLE 23
DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS, HOW FREQUENTLY DID THE PRESIDENT DIRECTLY ASK YOU FOR FEEDBACK CONCERNING HIS OR HER PERFORMANCE?

	Total %	Public %	Private %
More than once a month	14.5	17.2	13.3
About once a month	23.3	21.1	24.5
Less than once a month	27.5	25.0	28.8
Not at all	25.1	29.6	22.8
n/a	9.4	7.2	10.6
Total	**99.8**	**100.1**	**100**

- *According to board chairs, presidents tend to seek critical feedback about their own performance but don't tend to seek good news about themselves. [Board chairs' responses]*

TABLE 24

THINKING ABOUT THE PAST SIX MONTHS, WAS IT CHARACTERISTIC OF THE PRESIDENT TO:

	Yes %	Don't Know %	No %	Total %
Negative Feedback				
Ask others to be critical when they gave him or her feedback?	53.7	24.5	21.8	**100**
Prefer detailed, critical appraisals, even though they might hurt?	45.8	27.8	26.4	**100**
Positive Feedback				
Tend to seek good news about him or herself?	20.9	22.7	56.4	**100**
Ask for feedback if he or she knew it would be positive rather than negative?	16.1	26.8	57.0	**99.9**

Note Scale:
Yes = very or generally characteristic;
Don't Know = undecided, don't know, or no answer;
and No = very or generally uncharacteristic.

ASSISTANCE FOR FUTURE REVIEWS

- *Most presidents and board chairs thought that printed materials would be useful to improve future reviews, but most were not interested in workshops or consulting services.*

TABLE 25

WHAT ASSISTANCE, IF ANY, WOULD BE HELPFUL TO YOU OR YOUR BOARD FOR FUTURE ASSESSMENTS? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

	Presidents			Board Chairs		
	Total %	Pub. %	Pri. %	Total %	Pub. %	Pri. %
Sample checklist of performance criteria	59.3	52.8	64.1	68.3	63.8	70.5
Sample evaluation forms	53.2	48.1	57.0	59.0	59.2	58.9
Literature on presidential assessment	45.8	41.5	49.0	56.2	46.1	61.3
Sample evaluation policies	45.3	38.9	50.0	47.8	44.7	49.3
Summary data from this survey	38.4	34.1	41.5	47.6	44.7	49.0
Workshops for chairs or trustees	21.0	25.6	17.6	17.0	21.7	14.6
Workshops for presidents	14.4	17.3	12.2	8.4	11.2	7.0
Informal counsel by phone	10.4	8.8	11.7	9.3	7.2	10.3
Presidential assessment consulting services	6.3	7.3	5.6	3.5	3.3	3.6

Survey Methodology

Merrill Schwartz conducted a survey of presidents and chairs of governing boards of American colleges and universities to learn about the processes used for evaluating academic presidents, what presidents and board chairs reported as the outcomes of presidential assessment, and how governing boards evaluated their own performance.

The study was designed to collect from a broad population more comprehensive, current data on board and presidential assessment than has previously been available. Questionnaire items were based on previous studies in higher education (CUPA, 1996; Ingram, 1993a, 1993b; Nason, 1984) as well as practical and theoretical literature about performance appraisal in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.

DATA COLLECTION

Three survey instruments were developed: one for presidents, one for board chairs of single-campus institutions, and one for chairs of multicampus system boards. The presidents' survey concerned only presidential assessment, while the board chairs' surveys included questions on presidential assessment as well as board self-assessment. Subjects included all accredited postsecondary institutions in the United States that were active, former, or prospective members of AGB. Self-administered questionnaires were mailed in January 1997 to the presidents and board chairs of these institutions. One follow-up mailing to nonrespondents was done immediately after the initial deadline passed.

SURVEY POPULATION

Respondent Presidents. For the purposes of this study, "president" means the chief executive officer of an institution or system, regardless of title.

Survey population. Respondents included 1,348 college and university presidents, a response rate of 64 percent of the survey population. The survey population included 2,112 presidents of all current, former, and prospective AGB-member institutions.

Universe of presidents. The total population or universe of presidents of American colleges and universities was 3,158, according to a study of academic presidents conducted by the American Council on Education. The survey population comprised 67 percent of the universe and included more than half the presidents in each Carnegie classification (between 54 percent and 86 percent). Respondent presidents comprised 43 percent of the universe of academic presidents and included between 32 percent and 61 percent of the universe of presidents in each Carnegie classification. The 1,348 respondent presidents included 39 percent (530) public sector presidents and 61 percent (818) private sector presidents, compared to the universe of presidents (3,158) with 56 percent (1,754) in the public sector and 45 percent (1,404) in the private sector (Ross, Green & Henderson, 1993, p. 3). See Table A for a comparison of these groups.

TABLE A
RESPONDENT PRESIDENTS AS PERCENTAGE OF THE UNIVERSE OF PRESIDENTS AND SURVEY POPULATION

Carnegie Code	Universe N	Population N	Respondents N	as % of Universe	as % of Population
RU 1&2 and DOC 1&2[a]	244	145	80	32.8	55.2
CU 1&2	611	360	264	43.2	73.3
Lib Arts 1&2	577	497	351	60.8	70.6
Two Year	1,300	702	417	32.1	59.4
Specialized	426	309	203	47.7	65.7
Systems[b]	–	–	33	–	–
Blank[c]	–	99	–	–	–
Total	**3,158**	**2,112**	**1,348**	**42.7**	**63.8**

Note. Carnegie codes include: research universities 1 and 2, comprehensive universities 1 and 2, liberal arts colleges 1 and 2, two year colleges, specialized institutions, and multicampus systems.
[a] Doctoral and research universities were reported together in the study of the universe of presidents.
[b] Systems was not a Carnegie code at the time of the study of the total population.
[c] Carnegie codes were identified for all respondents.

Respondent Board Chairs. For the purposes of this study, "board chair" means the head of the institution's governing board, regardless of the title given to the body or the person who heads it.

There were 535 respondents to the survey of board chairs of single campus institutions, a response rate of 33 percent. The survey population included 1,627 chairs of governing boards of institutions headed by a single president that were current, former, or prospective members of AGB. Chairs of multicampus systems, with multiple presidents, were treated as a separate population. The survey instruments included two sections, one on presidential assessment and one on board self-assessment; data on board self-assessment is reported in a separate AGB occasional paper.

The respondents included 166 (31 percent) public and 369 (69 percent) private sector board chairs. By Carnegie classifications, respondents' institutions were 32 percent liberal arts, 26 percent two-year, 22 percent comprehensive, 16 percent specialized, and 5 percent research or doctoral granting. Almost half of the private-sector chairs were from liberal arts institutions, and over two-thirds of the public-sector chairs were from two-year institutions. The distribution by sector and Carnegie classification was quite similar for respondent chairs and respondent presidents. See Tables B and C for details.

TABLE B
RESPONDENT BOARD CHAIRS BY CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION AND SECTOR

Carnegie Classification	Total		Public		Private	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Research 1&2	2.4	13	3.6	6	1.9	7
Doctoral 1&2	2.2	12	4.2	7	1.3	5
Comprehensive 1&2	21.5	115	19.3	32	22.5	83
Liberal Arts 1&2	32.4	173	1.8	3	46.1	170
Two-Year	26.0	139	69.3	115	6.5	24
Specialized	15.5	83	1.8	3	21.7	80
Total	**100**	**535**	**100**	**166**	**100**	**369**

TABLE C
RESPONDENT BOARD CHAIRS, RESPONDENT PRESIDENTS, AND UNIVERSE OF PRESIDENTS BY CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION AND SECTOR

Carnegie Classification	Respondent Board Chairs %	Respondent Presidents %	Universe of Presidents %
Research 1&2 and Doctoral 1&2[a]	4.6	6.0	7.7
Comprehensive 1&2	21.5	19.6	19.3
Liberal Arts 1&2	32.4	26.0	18.3
Two-Year	26.0	30.9	41.2
Specialized	15.5	15.0	13.5
System[b]	–	2.4	–
Total	**100**	**99.9**	**100**
Sector			
Public	31.0	39.3	55.5
Private	69.0	60.7	44.5
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

[a] Research 1 and 2 and Doctoral 1 and 2 were combined in the study of the universe of presidents.
[b] This was not a category in the study of the universe of presidents.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Merrill Schwartz is a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland. Her doctoral dissertation, "Assessing the Performance of Academic Presidents," examines national assessment practices and the factors associated with useful, satisfying reviews.

For several years, Schwartz arranged board development programs and consulting services for governing boards as Director of Board Education Services at AGB. Currently, she provides consulting services independently to higher education institutions and organizations.

Schwartz worked for almost a decade with colleges and their students at The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars. In positions ranging from program coordinator to director of internships, she provided college students with academic experiential learning opportunities in the nation's capital.

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